

\*92. *Merula migratoria*. Robin. Quite common. Rather common on the bare top of Squam Range.

\*93. *Sialia sialis*. Bluebird. Common.

94. *Passer domesticus*. English Sparrow. A few around some of the farm houses.

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## THE LARKS OF GERMANY.

W. F. HENNINGER.

Characteristic of the Larks is the bill, longer than that of the finches and buntings, longer and broader wings, and the earth-colored plumage, commonly called "lark gray." Only three species are ordinarily found in Germany, the others being little more than mere stragglers. Largest of these is the Crested or Tufted Lark, easily recognized by its conspicuous crest, then the far-famed Skylark, well known to all, and the smallest, the Woodlark, distinguished from the others by its size and the white wing-bands or spots.

A little home-body is the Tufted Lark. The dusty roadside, fence-posts, deserted wagons and ploughs, stone walls, and roofs are her home, where we can listen to her low, but not uninteresting song, or see her skipping through the air with lispings notes or running to and fro with raised hood, as she snatches up an insect or a grain. Having entered Germany but lately, she has become familiar in many a region. She loves the slopes of the mountains, the grain-fields, and is more common in sandy places than her cousins. There she makes her nest on the ground in the fields, meadows and gardens; four to six eggs it holds, white or cream-colored, with gray and brownish spots. Both parents brood and take care of the young in turn, looking for their food. Even winter's chills do not drive them away. They run ahead of us in the streets with Yellowhammers and Sparrows, or visit our back yards and barns to look for offal, dungheaps, spilled grain and similar tid-bits, being very tame and modest, easily contented at all times, liked by young and old for their confidence in man, till spring comes and the humble creature is forgotten for her more brilliantly singing relatives.

In golden splendor the morning sun appears on the eastern horizon, still tinted with the rosy hue of early dawn, like mil-

lions of liquid diamonds the dew is sparkling in the fragrant grass of the meadows, and from the leafy arches overhead the morning concert of our friends is sounding forth in honor of their Maker's praise. Look! From yonder field of grain, in ever-widening spirals, higher and higher rises a plain-colored bird, floating on the balmy breeze of the bright spring morn. The little throat is swelled with exuberant joy and the sweetest warbling reaches our ear, now loud and clear, as the spiral nears us, now soft and distant as it turns the other way. How insignificant is the song of our Horned Lark in comparison with this music of the Skylark! With delightful ecstasy we follow it with our eyes till it soars as a mere speck in the azure sky, and now is lost to our sight. From every field and meadow they seem to rise, in glorious blending their notes ring out till some bold Sparrow Hawk sweeps past us and buries his cruel talons in the merry songster's breast, slowly dragging it to some secluded spot for lunch. For a few moments all is quiet, but soon they rise again on all sides. The Skylark's lyric nature accompanies its movements with the singing life of its soul. With its slow rising it creates the beautiful warbling trill, and in the invisible realms of the ether the flute-notes of its nature melt away in circling waves, whirling they descend earthward again, till, like a dart of Cupid, it swoops into the surging sea of grain. There she seeks her food—humble fare—grain, insects and worms. There she builds her excuse of a nest—a mere hollow, lined with rootlets. There she watches her four or five white, brown-speckled treasures, there she raises her broods in safety from the haunts of man, but not always of the reaper's scythe.

But come again with me to the meadows, when the twilight falls and the sun has gone to sleep. Softer now the tints of heaven, hushed the voices of the joyous spring, murmuring lowly are the forests' trees, slowly homeward turneth man and beast. Far, far away the Lark's melodious voice is heard; but no! there she sits behind a clod in the furrow near by. More like that insolent ruffian, the Sparrow, she seems in her plain garb, and I understand your look of disappointment. But 'tis often so; in plain garb is hidden many a jewel. And as she runs over the clods and through the grain with heaving breast, graceful neck, alert and free, you wilt soon see. 'tis

not the Lord of ruffians, but a star of heaven come down to earth. Now she stops! Sweetly, tenderly falls the song upon thine ear. It speaks to thee of by-gone days, of love's first dream, of childhood's play, of monher's tender care, of the old home by the wayside, of the brook's clear flowing waters, of all that is dear and sweet to memory and heart. The German nation's "Gemuet" is in the song. A yearning and a longing for yonder world comes over the soul as the dream-like love notes call 'till the last sound vanishes in the solemn darkness of the night. And Shakespeare called the Lark "shrillgorg'd"! Had the great poet no ear for music? Or is it because there is such a brutal shrillness in all British efforts of philanthropy and civilization from the time of Richard Coeur de Lion down to the days of Lord-butcher Kitchener in the Transvaal, that e'en the Lark to them was "shrillgorg'd"? For once, immortal Briton, thou wert mistaken! 'Tis not a "shrillgorg'd" monster, but nature's best, its own harmonious melody that reaches us in the Lark's divine lullaby and lets us feel the poet's truth:

"And I so ravished with her heavenly note  
I stood entranced and had no room for thought."

Did you ever wander homeward through the woods, when the dark-winged angel of the night has kissed the fields and hamlets and breathed down to the roots of everything that lives? Come with me then, where the bushy beeches whisper softly, where the gloomy firs stand out in silent awe, broken here and there by the ghost-like drooping branches of the birch, whose bark reflects the moonlight's silvery rays,

"Als waere dran in stiller Nacht  
Das Mondlicht bleeven hangen."

where the blooming heath's carpet, in shining red and white, sends out its delicious odor. Only the distant croaking of the frogs in the treacherous shimmer of the marsh, the howling "boohoo" of the Horned Owl, that robber-knight of the winged world, the spinning of the Goatsucker is heard,—all else is quiet in the moor and heath. The Robins sleep in safety, the Mavis and the Skylark have ceased their song, the Nightingale's bosquets and man's abode are far away, only the elfs dance over the meadows' fog, inviting you to join

their merry throng, and erlking's will-'o-the-wisp lures you into unknown depths. Hurriedly we pass along the barren fallow waste, close by the sombre forest. But lo! Up from the sterile barren goes a song, clear, bright and cheery. Is it a new spirit form that wants to mock us? Everywhere it seems to carry peace and comfort by its virile master-melody—a lovely greeting to the weary, wandering man! High up into the air they soar, those earnest, flute-like notes. Forgotten are the hobgoblins of the night, sweet thoughts of rest and joy enter thy heart, trust to God is poured into thy soul! Yes, praised be thou, O woodlark, thou living voice of mountain-heath and solitude! Though not crowned with the Nightingale's laurels, not made immortal by the poet's strain, to me thou art dearer in thy modesty. Not only in the dazzling light of day thou cheerest us, the dwellers on the earth, but in the night, "which is no mortal's friend," thou bringest with thy heavenly flute a welcome to the lonely pilgrim!

'Tis a song simpler than the Skylark's, but still more pleasing to the ear, a true ring of the forest's rustling leaves. It is a slow verse of some ten to twelve deep flute-notes, followed in a few seconds by a higher trill. Each spiral of its flight brings out a new verse, clear, powerful and melodious, full of masculine strength and not so much of feminine sentimentality as the Skylark's song. And even in the fall good singers let their voices be heard, though softer then and more subdued. Her flight is not so wide, more swerving than the Skylark's, and on the ground she is more modest in her agile movements than the latter. Twice a year she makes her pretty, well-built home on the ground in the heath or by the elder-bushes, to hold her five white, gray-speckled eggs. Carefully running on the ground for quite a distance, she brings the food to her loudly clamoring young. One of the latest birds to leave us in the fall, she is one of spring's earliest messengers, with her heavenly song, though snow may still cover the heath and forest, and we rejoice to have her with us again.